

Communicator

Merriman Park/University Manor Neighborhood Association

May 2008

**Election of Officers
Hotchkiss Elementary School**

**May 13, 2008
7:00 p.m.**

It is that time of year again when we need to elect new officers for the coming year. Some officers will be returning for another tour of duty, with your approval, and others will be rolling up their sleeves to help shape the 2008-2009 Merriman Park/University Manor Neighborhood Association for the first time. The Nominating Committee was headed up this year by Brenna Rivas, our Crime Watch Chairman, and they introduced a slate of nominations for various offices.

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor so if you would like to serve in some capacity or if you know a neighbor you feel would bring expertise or have the time to devote to our neighborhood, please come to the May meeting and hold up those hands! If you are not able to volunteer for a position, come lend your support by voting for your favorite nominee!

Reshaping our Association

As I'm sure you are all aware, there's a lot of development happening in our area of town and we need to stay on top of things – especially zoning and code. City government is also instituting some changes like Code Enforcement, for example, that will change the way they do business by developing "beats" similar to The Dallas Police Departments. Having assigned specific Code Enforcement Officers assigned to beats will narrow the focus of each of those officers, giving them a chance to know the area better and respond faster.

The demographics also continue to change in our neighborhood, making it more and more important to be "kid friendly" and in tune with busy work schedules. For those reasons and many others, we need all the help we can get to reshape our Association to be in step with the needs of today. So let us know if you can help, whether it is serving as an officer, heading up a committee, patrolling as a VIP or volunteering for any effort that benefits our neighborhood. We would also like to hear your suggestions – what kind of changes would you like to see in our Association? Send your suggestions to president@mpum.com.

Email Communication

This is the last scheduled Newsletter until next September. The advantage of printing newsletters is that we are assured they reach each and every resident in our neighborhood. But it is expensive and time consuming – thus the reason we have traditionally only published 5 newsletters each year. In the future, we will be relying more on email in an effort to keep you up to date on a more regular basis. So if you are not already receiving neighborhood notices, send your email address to info@mpum.com so you will not miss out on important information and updates.

There's a lot happening in our area. New development is happening all around us, apartments are being removed, new retail establishments are coming, Lake Highland

Town Center will bring retail and more upscale housing. To stay in touch with all the activities, make sure we have your email address! Our email list has become more important than ever to keep all of you informed.

Volunteer Positions needed:

If you have any amount of time to help the neighborhood at all, send an email to info@mpum.com and let us know your interest. A few examples are listed below but if you can help in any way at all, please let us know!

1. One or two leaders to pull our neighborhood together by seeking, training and overseeing neighborhood Block Captains.
2. Volunteer in Patrol – need patrollers and leaders to help with administrative duties such as reporting VIP activity to the N.E. Substation
3. Volunteer to petition residents on Kingsbury to apply for speed humps
4. Volunteer to closely monitor activities at Hotchkiss this summer when school is out
5. Volunteers to pick up trash around and in our neighborhood – Call (214) 349-7028 to sign up for a specified time for the "Trash Trail" or when you walk, take a plastic bag and clean as you go.
6. Participate as a MPUM volunteer for police and other city functions



Recycling: If you do not have a blue recycle cart and would like one, call 3-1-1 and make your request. We all need to start training ourselves to do more recycling because there are already some test areas in our city where the city is testing once a week sanitation pickup. The premise is that if you recycle your paper, plastic, metal and glass items in the blue recycle bin, your sanitation trash will reduce so you will not need pickup two times a week. Try it out. Start separating your trash between the trash cart and the blue recycle cart and see for yourself.

Another really good recycling change will be with the neighborhood igloos that currently only accept aluminum. The city is in contract negotiations with vendors to go to an all-in-one container that will allow you to place paper, plastic, metal and/or glass in one container. The benefit of using these neighborhood containers is that our neighborhood receives revenues. The neighborhood does not receive any revenue for the recycling you do using the city issued blue containers. We will keep you up to date with changes as we learn about them.

At Long Last Spring! (By Dottie Giesler, MPUM Beautification)

Have you noticed how beautifully everything is blooming this spring? We have had just the right blend of rain, warm/cool weather and sunshine to make all the plants really happy!

The wonderful weather makes for perfect planting conditions. How about planting a "special" spring garden? All you need is a relatively small space somewhere in your yard where plants can get the sun they need for most of the day. You could even plant your spring garden in pots so you could move them around.

Now is the time to get started with a variety of plants. All the garden centers and nurseries have starter plants on hand, now. You can plant flowers to provide a wide variety of color for your home. Flowers that do well in beds or pots include petunias, impatiens, begonias, gerbera daisies, periwinkles and zinnias with a few marigolds intermixed to provide even more color, and insect control.

This is also a great time to plant food plants such as a variety of tomatoes, bell peppers (all colors), spicy peppers, herbs of all kinds and even okra.

These too can be planted in beds and/or large pots. If you plant in pots, be sure the pots have holes in the bottom for good drainage.

The following is a list of suggestion to help you prepare you spring garden(s). The specialist at the garden centers can help.

1. Get to know your soil. What kind of soil do various plants need?
2. Know your climate. Which plants grow best now and which ones will last into the summer.
3. Add compost. You can buy it or you can create your own in a small area using almost any organic material. Do not add protein (meat scraps) to your compost pile.
4. Give up part of your lawn. It's fun and there is less grass to mow.
5. Share the garden plot, or the produce, with your neighbors.
6. Plan in the summer for plantings in the early fall. You can plant a wide variety of "greens" in the late summer and they can be harvested all through the fall.
7. Get to know your yard by tending your garden.
8. HAVE FUN!!!

What Happened to Our Wall?



An out of control driver took out our entry wall at Walling at Northwest Highway. We are in negotiations with the driver's insurance company. Stay tuned for more information on this effort. We will update those of you on the email list with news about reconstruction. If you are not on our email list, send a note to info@mpum.com and request to be added!

Also, we have appealed to our Representative on the City Council, Sheffie Kadane, to have Northwest Highway and Walling evaluated by someone in Transportation. We are hoping the officials will come up with some solutions to reduce the number of car accidents and fatalities that are occurring at or near this intersection. We will keep you updated!

Volunteers in Patrol



By now, I would hope all of you know about this group of volunteers in our neighborhood who are helping to keep you safe. They are doing an amazing job but right now keep in mind there are only 16 patrollers so far. These 16 people patrol at various times of the day and night. Attending the Dallas Police Department's Quarterly Crime Summit April 22nd, we were amazed to learn how crime increased in our Police Beat alone by 4% overall – from January 1 – March 31, 2008. That increase included 16 residential burglaries and 26 burglaries of motor vehicles. Yet in our neighborhood we have had only two residential burglaries in the past 6 months and in both cases, property was saved by alert neighbors.

The Dallas Police Department has made more of a presence in all neighborhoods, including ours. So it is the combination of the Police patrols, our VIPs and all of you staying alert that continues to set our neighborhood apart from other neighborhoods having lots of trouble.

However, we are approaching warm weather and the time when school will be out – both ingredients for the kind of crime we have experienced in the past. So we must all do everything in our power to watch over things for the coming months. Please stay alert and check out any kind of noise that catches your attention. Make sure on trash days you do not assume a noise is just the sanitation truck – we have found that many of our crimes happen on trash days. If there is a time you find yourself rationalizing a noise as just being the sanitation truck, make sure you are right. Check it out!

Know your neighbors and know when they have contracted work at their residence. Our neighborhood is full of construction trucks – mostly white ones – presenting a challenge to The Dallas Police Dept., our VIP Patrollers and to you because it is often difficult to determine when someone is legitimately in our neighborhood. The Police Department is asking all of you to call 911 if you see any kind of construction vehicle that looks suspicious. Don't be afraid to trouble the officers. They want the opportunity to check it out. Plus it brings patrol cars into the neighborhood which, in turn, sends a message to those who do not belong here. So help the police do their jobs by calling 911 if you have any suspicion at all.

IMPORTANT!!! Alley Maintenance!!

In order for the VIPs to do the kind of job we need, we need to ask each and every one of you to tend to your alley and continue doing so throughout the summer. The VIPs must use their own cars to patrol and all of their cars already have scratches they did not have before because they are having to travel down alleys that have not been maintained. Alley patrol is probably one of the most important things our VIPs can do for you – we have a track record already where one residential burglary was stopped in its tracks last year due to a VIP patrolling the alley. So the most important thing you can do is go take a look at your alley and trim everything back so VIP cars will not suffer further damage. VIPs travel in small and large cars, trucks, SUV's so make sure you are considering the largest vehicle when you do your trimming.

Also please take a few minutes and look behind your house for anything at all that would hurt tires. If you need help trimming your alley, please send a note to info@mpum.com and request help. We will give you a hand if possible. If you do not have internet access then call (214) 349-7028.

Dallas Police Department Crime Summit

April 22nd was the first Quarterly Crime Summit for 2008. Generally speaking crime is up all over the NE Division with Burglaries of Motor Vehicles leading the types of offenses, followed by Residential Burglaries, Auto Theft and other theft of opportunity when people do not secure their garages, sheds and when they leave things out in the open unattended.

Alarm Systems and good locks help deter residential burglaries but probably the most effective tool we have to prevent this type of crime is

each other. Our VIP deter crime and in some cases stop it cold but we need all of you to check things out if you hear anything out of the ordinary.

Motor Vehicle Burglaries could be reduced significantly in our city if people would stop leaving expensive items in their cars. It just is not safe to leave a PC, Ipod, CD's or anything of value. It is also not safe to leave your garage door openers in the car. Once in the hands of the wrong people, they can easily gain access to everything in your garage. So make sure you never leave your garage door opener in your car. Also, you are encouraged not to leave anything in your car that identifies where you live. Commonly we all leave our Insurance registration in the glove compartment. Start carrying your proof of insurance in your wallets and purses. Your car can be broken into at work, address secured from your proof of insurance and with garage door opener in hand, thieves can simply drive to your home and have easy access. Burglaries of Motor Vehicles represents 1/3 of all crime in our Northeast Dallas Police Department Division.

Women's Purses – Deputy Chief Jan Easterling continues to tell women how easy it is to have your purse stolen, especially when you are leaving a grocery store with your hands full of groceries. These guys drive by, one jumps out and grabs your purse and off they go with all your money and ID's. Another ploy is when you stop to get gas. Don't leave your purse in the passenger seat with the car unlocked because while you are putting gas in the car, they drive up, open the passenger door and take the purse and are off before you can barely say a word. So ladies, secure those purses.

Another tip shared at the Summit was to be aware of who is behind you and if you ever think someone is following you, do not go home. Drive to the nearest police or fire station if possible.

Chief Easterling also said all citizens need to train themselves to describe cars and people – not always as easy as it may sound. She shared some stories where the criminals were caught only because a citizen did such a great job of describing what they were seeing. And Chief Easterling said even if you only get some of the numbers on a plate, that is great. Even that helps so train your eye to describe people and cars and tags.

She also said that if you see something happening repeatedly that does not appear to be right but you are not sure, feel free to email or call the police and pass along your tip. You just never know when it could be important. Of course if it is an emergency, call 911 asap. You can send email tips to northeast210@dpd.dallascityhall.com and you can call your tip in by calling 214-671-0159.

Hotchkiss Elementary – Summer Vacation

We are all gearing up for summertime when students have a lot more time on their hands. According to the DISD Police, there are a few rules that need to be monitored at all times, but especially in the summer. Hotchkiss Elementary School is not a Public Park, nor is it a Public Dog Park. It is also not a place where the police want people hanging out. We have been working with the Principal of Hotchkiss and the DISD Police Dept. and our Volunteers in Patrol have been asked to call DISD Police Dispatch if the following activity is noted. If you see any of this activity, please let us know and we will report the problem:

1. DISD Police do not want to see anyone on the school grounds after dark
2. DISD Police do not want to see large groups of people on the school grounds when school is out over weekends, breaks or through the summer. Likewise they do not want groups of any kind "hanging out". There are simply no facilities to accommodate this kind of traffic. No restrooms, no security, no trash cans, etc.
3. DISD Police do not want to see the school grounds used as a dog park with dogs off leash and owners not cleaning up after them. So if you are going to use the school grounds for your dog, be sure they do "their business" elsewhere or pick up after them and obey the leash law. Don't forget, your dog may be the friendliest in the world but some kids are afraid of dogs. The playground should be maintained and used for children.

If you observe any of this kind of activity described above, call (214) 349-7028 or send an email to info@mpum.com and we will confirm and report the problem to the authorities.

Crime Watch – 6 Month Review

So how are we doing? We have been very fortunate thus far to hold crime at bay for the past 6 months while other neighborhoods have not been as lucky. Consider this. In the past 6 months we have only had two residential burglaries and in both cases the thieves did not get away with much, thanks to some alert neighbors!! The Dallas Police Department has stepped up their patrolling in residential neighborhoods, including ours, and our Volunteer in Patrol force has been very successful in sending a message to the street that this neighborhood is not a pushover. Add to that an ongoing relationship with Hotchkiss Elementary School Principal Lea Beach and the DISD Police and the DART Police and the combination has been great.

Still, in the past 6 months we did have:

Residential Burglaries	2
Theft	3
Criminal Mischief	5
Car theft	1
Burglary of Motor Vehicle	3

Our problem continues to be more foot traffic and often young adults. These could be from surrounding apartment complexes, DART passengers or just some teens with too much time on their hands. So make sure you watch this kind of foot traffic and if you see anyone on your street looking in cars, going up to doors or doing anything else you deem suspicious – call 911 immediately. If you see a suspicious car driving the neighborhood, also call 911. Be sure you explain to the 911 operator the nature of the suspicious behavior and train your eye to describe as best you can the description of the person or car behaving suspiciously. If possible, when a vehicle is involved, get as much of the plate number you can as well.

When you compare the stats above to other neighborhoods, including many much smaller neighborhood than ours, our track record looks very good. Add to this picture that we have a neighborhood school and we are backed up to the DART station and these stats are amazing! But we all know that crime is happening all around us and we will need to stay diligent, especially during the high crime summertime. So do what you can to help!!!!

- Stay alert to any unusual noises
- Pay attention to dogs barking as an indication someone could be in the alley
- Watch for suspicious cars and foot traffic and make sure you call 911 if you see anything at all
- Know your neighbors, watch over each other
- Maintain the alley behind your house so the VIPs can defend you without further damaging their cars!

- Contact Brenna Rivas if you have any concerns at all. She can be reached by sending an email to crimewatch@mpum.com or you may call her at (214) 553-5161

Skillman & Abrams Commercial Area

You may have noticed less homeless people around this intersection lately. The Dallas Police Department has been hauling away a paddy wagon full at a time of homeless people. The homeless people are not locked up for long periods of time but enough time to become a nuisance to them, which history has shown will cause them to move along to another location. If you see any evidence of homeless encampments or panhandling in the commercial area around our neighborhood, be sure you call 911.

New City of Dallas Television Channel 16

The city of Dallas is launching a new Cable Channel 16 as a way to connect city government with the residents. Being aired will be City Council meetings, a talk show called "Renaissance and Revitalization of Downtown" hosted by various city officials, a program called "Dallas Delivers - District Update" hosted by City Council members. The Dallas 360° series, produced by the Dallas public information office, will address issues such as public safety, economic vibrancy, the environment, education, the arts, recreation and government. Currently this will be available to Cable customers but the city is in negotiations with other carriers such as the satellite carriers. Plus they are in negotiations with vendors to stream this content on the City of Dallas website.

Pets:

As a friendly reminder, the City of Dallas mandates that cats and dogs must be confined to your yard at all times. Please take this law to heart, especially since we continue to receive reports from MPUM neighbors as well as friends in surrounding neighborhoods who have witnessed coyotes roaming our streets. Many of these sightings have been during daylight hours. It would be helpful if you would notify Carrie Clark in the event you spot a coyote so she can warn the neighborhood. Send Carrie an email at pets@mpum.com or call her at 214-356-3859. In the meantime, follow these handy tips to help deter wildlife from visiting your yard and to protect your pets:

- Feed your pets indoors
- Keep pets indoors, especially between dusk and dawn
- Make sure fencing is secure
- Do not allow your cats and dogs roam - it's against the law!
- Secure garbage lids



SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR – Applebee's, Medallion Center

The Communicator is a publication of the Merriman Park/University Manor Neighborhood Association, P.O. Box 820803, Dallas, TX 75382-0803. Articles, letters and suggestions are invited and appreciated and can be mailed to the P.O. Box or sent via e-mail to info@mpum.com. * *This issue of the MPUM Communicator was Paid for and Sponsored by Applebee's, Medallion Center, 6464 E. Northwest Hwy, Dallas, TX 75231, 214-361-7625.*

Street Lighting:

Great news! The city is assessing our light fixtures to see if any need to be upgraded. The upgrade is expensive and will only be done for areas the city deems too dark. The newer lights are a little brighter to help light reach the streets through the trees. The City of Dallas is considering a new ordinance that would require all property owners to keep trees clipped back away from street lights so the lights can adequately do their job but that has not happened yet.

But look for some new lighting to brighten up the Hotchkiss campus a bit. That will be a welcome addition and help with crime prevention efforts!

Neighborhood Contractors on our Website:

Don't forget that we have a list of contractors on our website in the business section. Just go to www.mpum.com and click on the business link on the left hand side of the page. If the contractor actually resides in our neighborhood, it is designated with a small graphic of a house and if the contractor is recommended by someone in our neighborhood who has had actual experience with the contractor, there is a "star." If you know of reliable contractors, send their information to info@mpum.com to add them to our neighborhood list. Of course, you will need to check them out for yourselves. What is acceptable to one neighbor may not be for another. So these are only recommendations.

Announcements:

May 10th – **Brinks Document Shredding** at the Town North Bible Church Parking lot at 8:00 a.m. Cost will be \$5 per box or tub. The truck will stay as long as there are people with shredding needs. So don't wait – show up on time or you might miss the truck!

Don't forget the Dallas Police Department Safety Fair on May 17, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the Northeast Substation at 9915 E. Northwest Highway. The kids will love this event and adults will learn a lot about crime prevention and have opportunity to say hello to those who protect us. It really is the best DPD event so do not miss this!!

You and your friends are invited to attend a free Christian Science Lecture sponsored by Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, 6414 Abrams Road, entitled, "Christian Science Healing: The Application of God's Law". The Lecture will be held Saturday, May 10th, at 11:00 am, at the Renaissance Hotel, 900 East Lookout Drive, Richardson, TX. The lecturer will be Martha R. Moffett, C.S., and member of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship. Parking is \$3 for 2 hours.

Child care will be provided. For more information, call 214-327-0877, or visit www.christiansciencetexas.org.

Yard of the Month:

April Yard of the Month 7031 Arboreal
May Yard of the Month 7030 Winchester

Congrats!

Rick Webber is our Zoning Chairman and a member of our VIP Patrol. Rick was recently elected to be the President of the local chapter of the International Plastic Modelers Society. This group will be having a modeling contest and show at the Grapevine Convention Center on May 31, 2008. If you would like more info about this show call Rick at 214-348-3526.

Kevin and Kellye Rockecharlie celebrated John Marshall's first birthday in April.

A belated congrats to Rick Webber's family as they welcome Edward Richard Webber VI who will be turning a hefty 1 year old in August.

If you happened to see pink and blue balloons in the Haughton's front yard, they have two new pups! After a close call and a trip to the emergency clinic, Lacie brought the Haughtons two beautiful puppies, named Peanut Butter and Reeces, and all are doing well – including Jennie Lou, who is busy passing out pink and blue bubble gum cigars to her friends. ☺

One of our residents, Beth Mahy, is the featured artist at the Haley-Henman Gallery Art Show from April 5 – May 17 – 2335 Hardwick Street, Call 214-749-1277 for information.

Chris and Kim Armstrong of Kingsbury Drive welcomed a beautiful baby daughter, Jaelyn Marie, on March 12 of this year.

Andrew Holmes, son of Aaron and Katherine Holmes of Kingsbury Drive, will celebrate his first birthday on May 2. Actually, he's too young to celebrate. Big brother Jake will do it for him.

The MPUM Mom's Group would like to wish all Mom's a Happy Mother's Day! And welcome the neighborhood's newest additions: Avery (2/15), Jaelyn (3/12), Foster (3/22), and Sarah (3/27). For more information on joining the neighborhood Moms' group, check out our link on the MPUM website

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR – Applebee's, Medallion Center



\$5.00 Off (When you spend \$20.00 or more)

For all residents of MPUM only. Must have a valid ID with an address on one of the following streets: Arboreal, Berryhill, Edgerton, Fenton, Freemont, Kingsbury, 6400 Block of Larmanda, Town North, Wakefield, Wakefield Cir., Walling, Whitehill, Wild Valley, Winchester

Take this coupon to Applebees in **Medallion Center** for one free Appetizer with purchase of an adult Entrée.*

*Limit one coupon per party per visit. One coupon per family. Coupon void if expiration date is left blank. Appetizer Sampler is excluded from this offer. Subject to availability. Valid only at the Applebee's Medallion Center. For dine-in only. Not valid towards the purchase of alcoholic beverages, or in conjunction with any other offer or discount. Not redeemable for cash. Coupon not applicable to tax or gratuity.

Good until 6/30/2008



HALF MONTH FREE!



Bring in this coupon and receive your first month's rent at half price. This offer is good on any one of our many different sizes of storage units. We offer 24 hour access seven days per week and have competitive rates.

This offer has been presented by:

Merriman Park/University Manor Neighborhood Association

Not Valid with other offers

Limit 1 coupon per customer